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ARTIST: Gino Vannelli

TITLES: The Best Of Gino Vannelli 20th Century Masters The Millennium Collection

CD #: 069 493 071-2

UPC #: 6 069 493 071-2 7

CD Logo: A&M Records

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Beth

Gino Vannelli

The Best Of Gino Vannelli 20th Century Masters The Millennium Collection

(CD Folder)

As a forerunner in the field of fusion-rock music in the '70s, Gino Vannelli's work is completely original in composition and sound. Combining rock and jazz, Vannelli's song structure was incredibly innovative, as was his use of instrumentation. Vannelli's music is not just complemented by drums, but propelled by that instrument in a busy, yet beautifully, melodic manner executed by some of the best in the industry— Graham Lear (Santana), Mark Craney (Jethro Tull) and Vinnie Colaiuta (Sting).

Vannelli, along with his producer brother Joe, was also a groundbreaker in the use of synthesizers in popular music, creating an orchestral sense to his rather complex arrangements. Check out the way he utilizes the then-new technology in "Love Of My Life," for example, which he explained in a 1998 bio. "While putting our group together, we had bought a Mini Korg synthesizer. We fooled around with its sounds and realized that if we piled their notes on top of each other, we could use them like single horns, as an orchestrator would. That was totally unknown at the time." This collection features Vannelli's unique approach to music— his utilization of lush, cutting edge instrumentation during that period, lots of notes, and compositional quirkiness, which displays his fearlessness in taking chances, mixing genres, changing time signatures in the middle of a song and placing background instrumentation in the foreground.

"My music appeals to people who are progressive, who value the music, and who will put up with someone who's self-centered," he told *The Chicago Tribune* in 1975. "My audience comprises of people who like to be dared to dig it."

The Vannelli brothers most likely cultivated their unique approach to music early on as they grew up in Montreal with listening habits that included a rich variety, from the classical music of Ravel and Debussy, to the jazz of Miles Davis and Dave Brubeck, along with the pop and R&B of the times. Their father had given up a career in music to raise his family, but the inspiration seeped into his children's veins as (eldest) Joe took up the keyboards, (youngest) Ross worked on the guitar and (middle son) Gino, at 10, initially settled on the drums (which explains why his songs are extremely percussive and feature the drums predominantly).

"At that point I admired Gene Krupa and wanted to be like him," he told the *Alberta Music Express* in 1976. "When I was 16, I found I liked singing and playing the piano. I really hadn't contemplated singing that much, but I saw that the best way to express myself was to write, the best way to express my songs was to sing them."

By 15, Vannelli had scored a record contract with RCA, which only lasted for one single (under the name of Van Elli), but gave him some business savvy and enough confidence to pursue his dreams. After fruitless exploration in New York, Vannelli took to the streets of L.A. with his brother Joe. Two days before their scheduled flight home, Vannelli activated a brave plan at the gates of A&M Records.

“After four hours of waiting, Herb Alpert came walking across the lot from his office, and I almost ran over him,” Vannelli recalled in a bio. “Obviously, he was shocked. The guard came running after me - it was chaotic. I think Herb saw that glint in my eye and knew what I was really about, and let me play a few of my songs (including “Crazy Life,” “Mama Coco” and “Powerful People”—all included herein). As I sang, he just smiled. When I finished, he said, ‘Okay, let’s do it, on one condition—that I produce your first album.’”

Alpert produced the 1973 release, *Crazy Life*, which attracted little attention, but the label head allowed Joe and Gino to produce their subsequent projects, which perhaps brought a more defined sound to the public. The track to “People Gotta Move” from *Powerful People*, did just that—made people move—with the help of Graham Lear’s propelling drum part, and the motivating sentiment of the lyrics, helping give Vannelli his first chart single in 1974 and earning him his first Grammy® nomination. It wouldn’t be until four years later, though, that Vannelli would have his next real hits.

Obviously, there was an abundance of great music in the interim (sometimes underappreciated due to its progressiveness), such as the soaring vocals in the arousing, high-spirited “Fly Into The Night,” the beautifully passionate (and compositionally unique) “Love Of My Life,” as well as the energetic “One Night With You.”

Vannelli’s commercial breakthrough occurred with 1978’s *Brother To Brother*. The slower paced “I Just Wanna Stop” made the Top Five and garnered another Grammy® nomination. Its success also helped the album to sell platinum and open the ears of the public to the other cuts on the project such as the wonderfully irrepressible “Appaloosa,” the funkier “The River Must Flow,” and “Wheels Of Life.” The latter, a textured, layered ballad that displays Vannelli at his best, musically, lyrically and vocally, and should have been a huge hit, but for whatever reason, never got there.

His next album *Nightwalker* featured his last big hit, the soul-searching “Living Inside Myself.” Again, a more commercial ballad, “Living Inside Myself,” with its lush background vocals and Vinnie Colauti’s power drums, proved that radio was more attuned to his subdued material.

As you’re drawn into the intensity of his vision, you can’t help but ask why Vannelli was never the superstar his music warranted. Obviously, he was a little ahead of the times with his injection of jazz into rock, and the non-formulaic design of his music. But that’s what made his compositions so exciting and passion-filled. Those instrumental twists and turns may have kept him too often from the top of the charts, but definitely account for the tapestry of music that must move the listener to give thanks for his daring approach to his art.

Robyn Flans
January, 2002

- 1) Fly Into This Night
(Gino Vannelli)
A&M single 1911
Produced by Gino Vannelli & Joe Vannelli with Geoff Emerick

from the A&M album *The Gist Of The Gemini*

- 2) I Just Wanna Stop (3:36)
(Ross Vannelli)
A&M single 2072
Pop #4 / charted 9/9/78
AC #4 / charted 9/23/78
R&B 21 / charted 9/16/78
Produced & Arranged by Gino Vannelli, Joe Vannelli & Ross Vannelli
from the A&M album *Brother To Brother*

- 3) Living Inside Myself (4:24)
(Gino Vannelli)
Arista single 0588
Pop #6 / charted 3/21/81
AC #5 / charted 4/4/81
R&B #45 / charted 4/11/81
Produced & Arranged by Gino Vannelli, Joe Vannelli & Ross Vannelli
from the Arista album *Nightwalker*
Courtesy of Arista Records

- 4) Appaloosa (4:43)
(Gino Vannelli)
Produced & Arranged by Gino Vannelli, Joe Vannelli & Ross Vannelli
from the A&M album *Brother To Brother*

- 5) The River Must Flow (3:49)
(Gino Vannelli)
A&M single 2133
Produced & Arranged by Gino Vannelli, Joe Vannelli & Ross Vannelli
from the A&M album *Brother To Brother*

- 6) Crazy Life (2:53)
(Gino Vannelli)
A&M single 1467
Produced by Herb Alpert
from the A&M album *Crazy Life*

- 7) One Night With You (4:19)
(Gino Vannelli)
A&M single 2025
Produced & Arranged by Gino Vannelli & Joe Vannelli
from the A&M album *A Pauper In Paradise*

- 8) Wheels Of Life
(Gino Vannelli)
A&M single 2114
Pop #78 / charted 2/17/79
AC #24 / charted 2/10/79
R&B #91 / charted 2/17/79
Produced & Arranged by Gino Vannelli, Joe Vannelli & Ross Vannelli
from the A&M album *Brother To Brother*

- 9) Love Of My Life
(Gino Vannelli)
A&M single 1861
Pop #64 / charted 9/11/76
Produced by Gino Vannelli & Joe Vannelli with Geoff Emerick
from the A&M album *The Gist Of The Gemini*

- 10) Mama Coco
(Gino Vannelli)
A&M single 1760
Produced & Arranged by Gino Vannelli & Joe Vannelli
from the A&M album *Storm At Sunup*

- 11) People Gotta Move
(Gino Vannelli)
A&M single 1614
Pop #22 / charted 6/21/74
AC #17 / charted 10/12/74
Produced & Arranged by Gino Vannelli & Joe Vannelli
Associate Producer: Herb Alpert
from the A&M album *Powerful People*

- 12) Powerful People
(Gino Vannelli)
A&M single 1652
Produced & Arranged by Gino Vannelli & Joe Vannelli
from the A&M album *Powerful People*

Compilation Produced by Mike Ragogna
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Also Available by Gino Vannelli:

A Pauper In Paradise (750 214 664-2)

Brother To Brother (750 213 170-2)

Powerful People (750 213 120-2)

Slow Love (750 214 533-2)

Storm At Sunup (750 214 533-2)

The Gist Of The Gemini (750 213 112-2)

Ultimate Collection (069 490 597-2)

Yonder Tree (314 527 368-2)

The Best Of...20th Century Masters/The Millennium Collections Also Available:

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Cher (088 112 154-2)

Liza Millelli (069 490 877-2)

Peter Allen (069 490 878-2)

Patti LaBelle (MCAD-11943)

Gladys Knight & The Pips (012 159 282-2)

Diana Ross (012 159 185-2)

Diana Ross & The Supremes Vol. 1 (012 153 731-2)

Diana Ross & The Supremes Vol. 2 (012 157 929-2)

The Temptations Vol. 1 (012 153 362-2)

The Temptations Vol. 2 (012 153 733-2)

Smokey Robinson (012 159 499-2)

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(CD Inlay)

- 1) Fly Into This Night
- 2) I Just Wanna Stop
- 3) Living Inside Myself
- 4) Appaloosa
- 5) The River Must Flow
- 6) Crazy Life
- 7) One Night With You
- 8) Wheels Of Life
- 9) Love Of My Life
- 10) Mama Coco
- 11) People Gotta Move
- 12) Powerful People

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(Sticker copy)

Includes “I Just Wanna Stop,” “Living Inside Myself,” “Apaloosa” and “People Gotta Move”
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